Classroom Activity

The Name Game: An Integer Activity

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Introduction

According to the NCTM's *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* document, all students should "understand the meaning and effects of arithmetic operations with fractions, decimals, and integers" (NCTM, 2000, p. 214). Creating and using games and activities that support this principle are important for the students to engage in so that they become more mathematically powerful. I have used this activity with students from the middle school level to inservice elementary school teachers enrolled in a graduate program in mathematics education. This activity can be used to motivate students to add, compare, and order integers.

Calculating Word Values

Students use the integers to locate the value for each letter in a given word and then determine the value of the word by computing the sum of the integer values illustrated below.

A (-5)	F (+3)	K (+11)	P (-7)	U (+1)	Z (+2)
B (-8)	G (-4)	L (+13)	Q (+5)	V (+8)	
C (+6)	H (+4)	M (-12)	R (-11)	W (-10)	
D (-13)	I (-2)	N (+9)	S (+12)	X (-3)	
E (-1)	J (-6)	O (+10)	T (+7)	Y (-9)	

An example: Ohio

O H I O

+10 +4 -2 +10

(+10) + (+4) + (-2) + (+10) = +22 $\quad |+22| = +22$ is the total value of the word.

An Activity Idea

An extremely motivating game that I use with all my students when studying integers is the following: I often challenge my students to compute the integer value of their first name (plus last name, if there is a tie with first names). The student that has the greatest absolute value wins a prize, such as candy or a pen/pencil. All levels of students enjoy this activity and, of course, winning a prize. Most school-age students don't even realize that they are practicing an important mathematical skill. They are simply trying to win a prize.

Try this game and let the author know the results at rkrach@towson.edu.